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The plane felt crowded. It was huge. I had never seen an aircraft of this size. There must have been at least five hundred people there. I was sitting in my seat looking through my window. I could hardly hear the girl in the seat next to mine because of the sound of the plane's engine. She was telling me something about her family. I knew I was going to miss my family. My mom couldn't come with me to the boarding gate. She was really sad. I remember seeing her in tears waving goodbye with her hand. At that moment, however, I wasn't thinking about missing them. I was thinking about how it was going to be this next year away from home. I was excited to make new friends and start high school— that was what I was most excited about— the typical American high school, which appears in the movies. Coming from Spain, I honestly had high expectations.

I thought back to my previous year in Spain. In Spain, the Covid situation was similar to here. We started the confinement around March 2020. There were not enough masks for everyone, and we could not go outside the house, even for a walk. We had to do online classes. Those were pretty easy because we could not do too much work since we were at home. It was not the same as being in school. Around April, we could do little walks with the family to have some air outside the house— that was a real break. It was nice being outside.

Once confinement ended, we could go wherever we wanted, but we had to wear masks everywhere. That was a little uncomfortable, but it was better than being locked inside the house for that long time. At the end of September, we started the classes. It was half virtual, and half in school. The classes were divided—one half was in class, and the other half was online. It was a little weird, but it was much better than doing everything virtually. There were many rules about COVID, and there were a lot of activities that we could not do because of it. It was really annoying, but we got used to it. Until September 2021, that was the situation about school. In September 2021, the Spanish students were all going to be in school all the time. I believe it was a more normal school year, similar to before Covid, without counting, of course, the masks and the social distancing.

Being in the U.S., I have not experienced that year in Spain. Instead, five months later, I'm in Ms. Lee's English class. She's asking us to put our phones away. We are about to learn about Martin Luther King's speech. Many things have happened since I arrived in the U.S. While five months is a lot of time, I didn't even notice the time had passed— five full months. That's crazy. All the COVID stuff has not affected me too much. In the end, I got used to it, and I don't really struggle with it. One of the things that has become something I need is the mask breaks. Wearing a mask for a full day is uncomfortable, and it is particularly hard to do sports with a mask. That's

what I've been personally struggling with the most. I cannot really get used to it. I'm doing cheerleading, and it is worse to wear the mask because it's harder to breathe while exercising.

However, I'm glad I was able to participate in cheer since I know last year it was canceled. Also, my first experience with homecoming was disappointing because of COVID. We had to do it outside, on the football field, in order to not wear masks. There was no food or drinks. It was a little sad. Although there have been small things that I have not been able to do because of COVID, there are many more things I have been able to do. I went on a ski trip during the Christmas break and to New York. I'm grateful that I still can do many things that I wouldn't be able to do last year. I'm glad we can go to school in person because I have been able to meet many people and play sports.